

CONNOTATIVE MEANING IN ARIANA GRANDE'S SONG LYRICS ETERNAL SUNSHINE ALBUM

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Abstract

This study analyzes connotative meaning in selected songs from Ariana Grande's Eternal Sunshine album using Geoffrey Leech's theory. The research aims to identify the types, functions, and characteristics of connotative meaning found in the lyrics. A qualitative descriptive method was employed. The data consisted of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences containing connotative meanings from seven selected songs. The findings reveal three types of connotative meaning: positive (30 data), negative (35 data), and neutral (14 data). Negative connotation was the most dominant type, reflecting themes of heartbreak, emotional conflict, and insecurity. The dominant function was conveying emotion (27 data), while the most frequent characteristics were associative and subjective meanings (19 data each). The study concludes that connotative meaning plays a significant role in enriching the emotional and artistic quality of the album's lyrics.

Keywords: semantics, connotative meaning, song lyrics, Ariana Grande, Eternal Sunshine

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis makna konotasi dalam lagu-lagu terpilih dari album Eternal Sunshine milik Ariana Grande menggunakan teori Geoffrey Leech. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis, fungsi, dan karakteristik makna konotasi yang ditemukan dalam lirik. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan. Data tersebut terdiri dari kata-kata, frasa, klausa, dan kalimat yang mengandung makna konotasi dari tujuh lagu terpilih. Temuan mengungkapkan tiga jenis makna konotasi: positif (30 data), negatif (35 data), dan netral (14 data). Konotasi negatif adalah tipe yang paling dominan, mencerminkan tema patah hati, konflik emosional, dan rasa tidak aman. Fungsi yang dominan adalah menyampaikan emosi (27 data), sementara karakteristik yang paling sering adalah makna asosiatif dan subjektif (masing-masing 19 data). Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa makna konotasi memainkan peran penting dalam memperkaya kualitas emosional dan artistik dari lirik album.

Kata kunci: semantik, makna konotasi, lirik lagu, Ariana Grande, Eternal Sunshine

1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human communication, enabling individuals to express ideas, emotions, and experiences. In linguistics, semantics is the branch that studies meaning in language, including both literal and implied meanings. One important aspect of semantics is connotative meaning, which refers to the emotional, cultural, and subjective associations attached to words beyond their dictionary definitions (Saeed, 2016). According to (Finegan, 2015) and (Fromkin et al., 2018) understanding semantic meaning is essential because communication often involves meanings that extend beyond dictionary definitions. In everyday interaction, people frequently use expressions that carry emotional, cultural, and contextual values, making semantic analysis an important approach for understanding how meaning is constructed in different forms of discourse. Connotative meaning is inherently unstable because it depends on personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and social environments. Therefore, the same word can evoke different emotional responses from different individuals, making connotation a particularly rich area of linguistic study (Setiani, 2020). The interaction between language and music further strengthens the emotional impact of lyrical messages (Patel, 2021). According to (Sopha, 2021), semantics is concerned with meaning interpretation and investigates how words, phrases, and sentences convey messages in communication. Meaning interpretation involves understanding the intended meaning shared by speakers and listeners. Similarly, (Yule, 2022) explains that successful communication depends not only on linguistic forms but also on how meanings are interpreted within particular situations. (Garcia Marchena, 2020) also states that meaning is closely related to the social and cultural context in which language is used. Therefore, semantic analysis provides an effective framework for understanding implied meanings in literary works, conversations, advertisements, films, and song lyrics. Therefore, semantic analysis is essential for identifying meanings embedded in linguistic expressions, including song lyrics. Among contemporary artists, Ariana Grande is recognized for her emotionally expressive songwriting. Her seventh studio album, *Eternal Sunshine* (2024), explores themes of love, heartbreak, self-reflection, healing, and personal growth. Many lyrical expressions in the album contain meanings that extend beyond their literal interpretations, indicating the presence of positive, negative, and neutral connotations. These connotations contribute significantly to the emotional depth and artistic value of the songs. Several previous studies have examined figurative language and semantic meaning in song lyrics. However, limited research has specifically investigated connotative meaning in Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album. Moreover, few studies have applied Geoffrey Leech's classification of positive, negative, and neutral

connotations to contemporary pop music. This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive analysis of how connotative meaning is represented in the album's lyrics. Previous studies on song lyrics have tended to focus on figurative language, metaphor analysis, or discourse analysis, rather than a systematic investigation of connotative meaning using a specific semantic framework. Research by (Agung et al., 2024), (Pratiwi et al., 2020) analyzed denotative and connotative meanings in Ariana Grande's songs, showing that lyrics contain various emotional and symbolic meanings. Studies by (Simatupang et al., 2023) also explored figurative language in Ariana Grande's songs, emphasizing the importance of analyzing non-literal expressions in musical texts. (Nasution et al., 2024) analyzed semantic meanings in Taylor Swift's songs using Leech's theory and found that contextual meaning contributes significantly to emotional interpretation. (Ahmad et al., 2025) examined the lyrics of *A Million Dreams* and reported that connotative meanings are more dominant than denotative meanings, emphasizing that symbolic language effectively conveys emotional messages and imagination in song lyrics. Furthermore, (Rahmawati, 2026) found that connotative meaning plays an important role in representing emotional experiences and symbolic messages in Jungkook's *Golden* album. These findings indicate that semantic studies on song lyrics continue to develop and remain relevant in linguistic research. Based on this gap, the present study addresses the following research problems: (1) What types of connotative meaning are found in the selected songs from *Eternal Sunshine*? (2) What functions do these connotative meanings serve in the lyrics? and (3) What characteristics of connotative meaning are represented in the songs? Accordingly, this study aims to identify the types, functions, and characteristics of connotative meaning in selected songs from Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album using Geoffrey Leech's semantic framework. The findings are expected to enrich semantic studies, particularly those concerning connotative meaning in contemporary song lyrics, and provide valuable insights for students, researchers, and music enthusiasts.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design using (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This characteristic makes it suitable to analyze the connotative meanings found in selected songs from Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because the study focused on interpreting and describing meanings embedded in song lyrics rather than measuring numerical data. The data source consisted of seven selected songs from the album: *Intro (End of the World)*, *Bye, Don't Wanna Break Up Again*, *Saturn Returns Interlude*, *Eternal Sunshine*, *Supernatural*, and *The Boy Is Mine*. The data were in the form of words, phrases, clauses,

and sentences containing connotative meanings. The data were collected using a documentation technique. The researcher obtained the song lyrics from reliable sources, read them repeatedly, identified expressions containing connotative meanings, and recorded the relevant data for analysis. The data were analyzed based on Geoffrey Leech's theory of connotative meaning. The analysis involved identifying and classifying the data into positive, negative, and neutral connotations, followed by interpreting their functions and characteristics within the context of the lyrics. The findings were then described and presented qualitatively to answer the research questions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of selected songs from Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* album reveals the existence of various connotative meanings based on Geoffrey Leech's theory. The findings are categorized into three aspects: types, functions, and characteristics of connotative meaning.

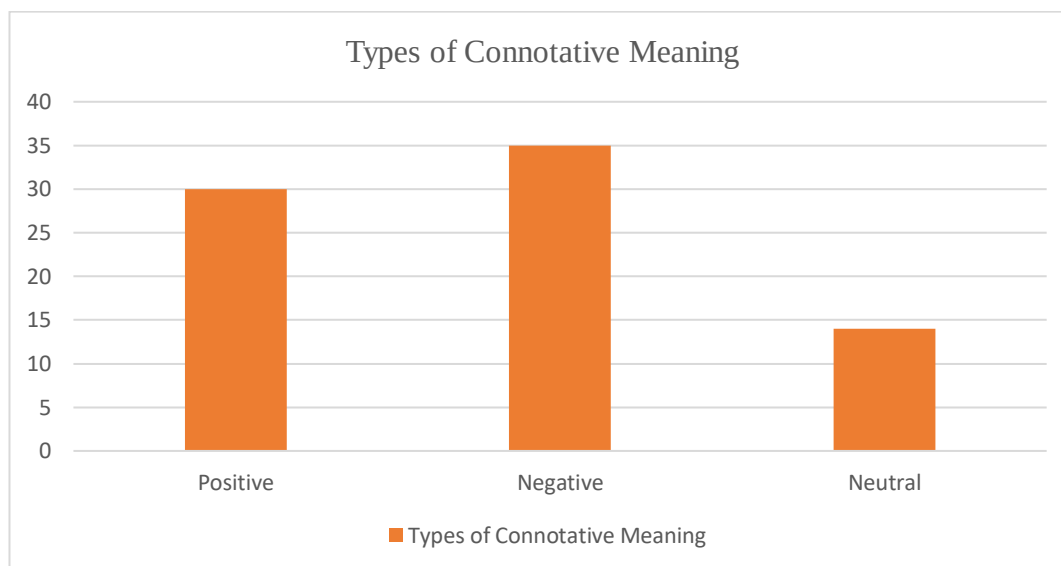


Figure 1. Types of Connotative Meaning

Based on Figure 1, the study identified 79 instances of connotative meaning. Negative connotation appears as the most dominant type with 35 occurrences, followed by positive connotation with 30 occurrences and neutral connotation with 14 occurrences. The dominance of negative connotation indicates that the album mainly represents emotional struggles, heartbreak, insecurity, and relationship conflicts.

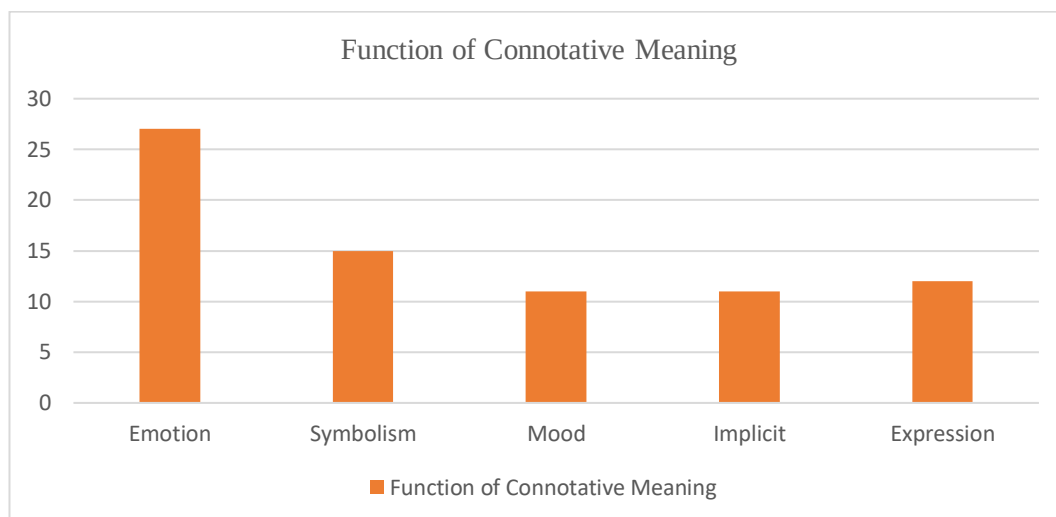


Figure 2. Functions of Connotative Meaning

The findings show that conveying emotion is the most frequent function of connotative meaning with 27 occurrences. This indicates that Ariana Grande mainly uses connotative expressions to communicate emotional experiences, including sadness, love, regret, vulnerability, and self-reflection.

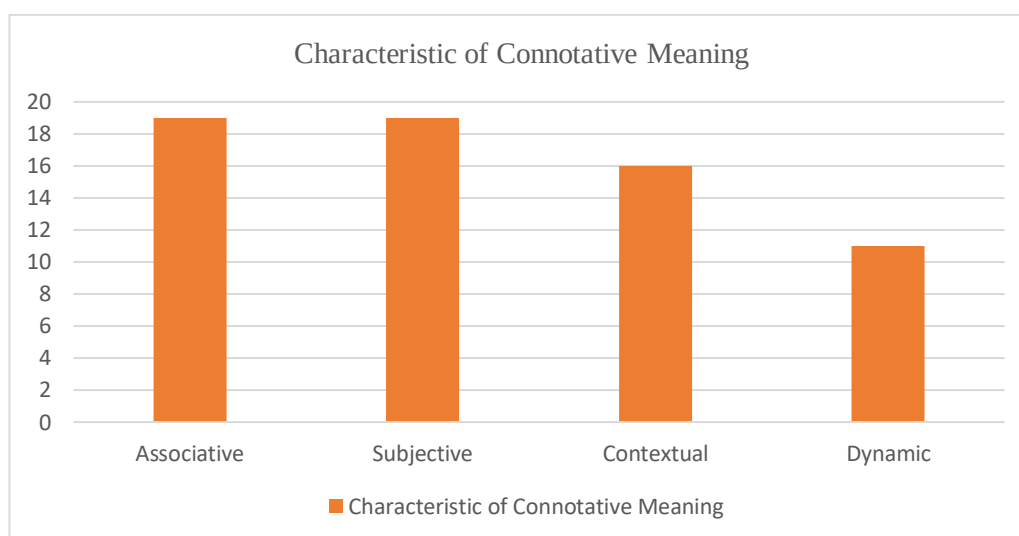


Diagram 3. Overall Characteristics of Connotative Meaning

Regarding characteristics, associative and subjective characteristics are the most dominant, each appearing 19 times. This finding shows that the meanings in the lyrics are strongly influenced by emotional associations and individual interpretation.

The dominance of negative connotation reflects the main emotional themes presented in *Eternal Sunshine*. Many lyrics portray experiences of heartbreak, emotional exhaustion, and relationship difficulties. For example, the expression “I fall asleep crying” in *Don’t Wanna Break Up Again* contains a negative connotation because the word crying represents not only tears but also emotional suffering and disappointment. Similarly, the

phrase “I showed you all my demons” in *Eternal Sunshine* uses the word demons to symbolize internal struggles, personal flaws, and emotional trauma. However, positive connotations also play an important role in representing healing and emotional development. Expressions such as “The stars, they aligned” in *The Boy Is Mine* symbolize destiny and romantic connection, while “It’s crystal clear” in *Supernatural* represents certainty and emotional clarity. These examples demonstrate that the album does not only focus on pain but also presents themes of acceptance, hope, and personal growth. The high frequency of the emotion function indicates that connotative language is primarily used as a tool for emotional expression. Through indirect and symbolic expressions, Ariana Grande communicates feelings that may be difficult to express through literal language. This supports Leech’s theory that connotation carries additional emotional and associative meanings beyond conceptual meaning. Furthermore, the dominance of associative and subjective characteristics shows that the interpretation of lyrics depends on emotional experiences and personal perspectives. Words such as sunshine, darkness, and demons gain deeper meanings because of the associations attached to them. The contextual and dynamic characteristics also demonstrate that meaning changes depending on the situation and the development of modern language. Overall, the findings indicate that connotative meaning is an essential element in Ariana Grande’s *Eternal Sunshine* album. Through connotative expressions, the lyrics successfully represent emotional complexity, symbolic messages, and personal experiences beyond literal interpretation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that connotative meaning plays a significant role in constructing emotional and symbolic meanings in Ariana Grande’s *Eternal Sunshine* album. Based on Geoffrey Leech’s theory, the analysis identified three types of connotative meaning: positive, negative, and neutral connotations. Among these categories, negative connotation was found to be the most dominant, indicating that the album mainly represents themes of emotional struggles, heartbreak, insecurity, and personal reflection. The study also reveals that conveying emotion is the most dominant function of connotative meaning, followed by symbolism, identity expression, mood building, and implicit meaning. This demonstrates that Ariana Grande uses connotative expressions not only to deliver messages but also to express complex emotional experiences and create deeper connections with listeners. Furthermore, the characteristics of connotative meaning found in the lyrics include associative, subjective, contextual, and dynamic characteristics. Associative and subjective characteristics appear most frequently, showing that the interpretation of the lyrics is strongly influenced by emotional associations and individual experiences.

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